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IF NOT DENOMINATIONS--?

RAYMOND EDWARD WILDER

B A      Pomona College      1928

Thesis

Submitted in the Department of

History of Christianity in

partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the Pacific

School of Religion

1930





# IF NOT DENOMINATIONS--?

RAYMOND EDWARD WILDER

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## DEDICATION

In sincere appreciation of A FRIEND,  
whose love of service and faith in me  
made this completed task possible,  
I most thoughtfully dedicate this Thesis.

R. E. W.





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## FOREWORD

Church unity!--I doubt if there is any more challenging or vital, but baffling, problem in Christianity today. Many are thinking about it, even if they do not understand it; many are desiring it, even if they do nothing about it; but many are thinking about it and desiring it who are devoting all their earnest efforts in an endeavor to permote the unity of Christendom. As a prospective leader in the church, it is my challenge and my duty to understand the problem of Christian unity, if it is to be understood, since it will be my privilege to share with many other Christians this most daring and most difficult task of undenominationalizing Christianity. hence, the facing of this problem for my Master's Thesis.

In the answering of my challenge, I have endeavored to understand in a general way the present situation, to appreciate the basic causes of this situation, and to seek a way out. I have found the situation a divided church, the causes psychological ones, and the solution a spiritual renaissance. The situation is fundamentally a neglect of facing the facts; the causes,





primarily false attitudes of mind; the solution, a truer living of the life of Christ. There may always be denominations, but not denominationalism; there may always be different attitudes of mind, but not divisiveness; there may always be different ways of practicing the life of Christ, but not unchristlike living. The progress toward undenominationalized Christianity will be very slow; but each experiment along the road toward unity of mind and unity of spirit will have its particular lesson to teach; and every earnest effort will have its success in one nearer step toward a more Christlike Christianity--a religion made up of Christians of "one Faith, one Hope, and one Love".

April 29, 1930.

R. E. W.



## Chapter I.

### THE CHALLENGE OF A DIVIDED CHURCH.

"Christ is appealing to us today by the condition of His church, by the condition of the world, by His death and resurrection, and by His Spirit's hunger in us for spiritual growth, no one of which is satisfied with anything less than a united church."

(Ainslie.)

There is a tradition that in a dream John Wesley stood at the gate of Hell. Multitudes were passing in. Wesley asked the gatekeeper who they were. "Did any Catholics go in there?" "Plenty of them." "Any Protestants?" "Plenty of them." "Any Presbyterians?" "Plenty of them." "Any Baptists?" "Plenty of them." "Any Congregationalists?" "Also plenty of them." Then Wesley asked with much concern, "Did any Methodist go in here?" "Plenty of them," was the reply. In his dream, Wesley thought that he was immediately transferred to the gate of Heaven. And he anxiously asked the gatekeeper there, "Are there many Methodists inside?" "None," the answer came. "Are there many Congregationalists?" "None." "Are there many Baptists," "None." "Are there many Presbyterians?" "None." "Are there many Catholics?" "None."





"Who are inside, then?" he asked with much perplexity; and the angel answered, "There are only Christians here."

Hayes. Pg.203.)

Though this story may be a fiction, it, nevertheless, rings with a great truth. Christians believe that in all probability they will get along without denominational differences in Heaven, and they believe that as God's will is done on earth as it is in Heaven, these denominational differences will be sure to disappear. Yet! what is the condition on earth?

In a certain village of nearly eight hundred people, there are five churches, each with a minister, working as though he were the only minister in the community. In financing those five little churches, five home-missionary boards are sending experienced money-raisers to help raise money to support the five ministers. The good name of the denomination is at stake. But even with what the missionary boards contribute in addition to what each little congregation can raise, there is a constant deficit. Hence, though often times failing, each congregation resorts to varied means of raising money,--fairs, suppers, entertainments, etc..

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At the very outset, all this weakens all the finest possibilities of spirituality. The small salaries weaken the ministers' best efforts in caring for the spiritual needs of the congregations, by the necessary concern for their families. But more! Each of these ministers must emphasize his denominational peculiarities, such as customs regarding the ordinances, church polity, public worship,--as though the salvation of the world hung upon these things. Each seems to say so loudly to the other, "A more excellent way show I unto you." The way to Christ is obscured by the controversies of His followers. What is the result of all this?-- non-essentials are given primary place, and vital Christianity is given a secondary place.

In another town, there are four congregations of Christians with their church buildings within two blocks of each other--(typical of so many communities). All the lines of trade in that town have formed cooperative organizations for mutual advantage. But in the matter of religion, there is the over-shadowing of divisiveness. The members of these four congregations meet on a common level in business and at social functions, but on reverting





to Christianity, all four are aloof in their pride of history, tradition, or scriptural interpretation. Can any one say that this is a condition of the purpose in Christianity?

There stand the friendly citizens of that little town. However, they are separated by apparently impossible barriers. Many are bitterly sectarian, with perhaps not more than a tenth of the church membership, who can intelligently state why they are separated from other Christians. And even those intelligent statements would have to do with such secondary matters as how people shall be baptised, how should the Lord's Supper be administered, what is the best denomination, rather than with the real vital problems of the world's redemption and social betterment.

"Nothing so strongly proves the falsity of a divided Christianity as its ability to create barriers, when its original purpose was to abolish all barriers."

(Ainslie.)

This divisiveness is a world-wide plague. The policy is false, and, therefore, the front which the church

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presents is false. Thus, millions are hostile to the church. They see no advantage in its fellowship. They are willing to go alone without the church. But, which is to be pitied most,--the church which has lost its way in sectarian entanglements, or the man who, in consequence of this condition, seeks alone for the paths of fraternity and eternal life?

The laity are beginning to realize that they are much alike,--that their differences are not in essential matters. They say:

"We are all Christians together. These differences are not vital to Christianity; they ought not to divide Christians from each other. We all are disciples of Jesus. We all read and study the same Bible. We all can show the "fruits of the Spirit" in our lives. We have one God, the Father; that makes us brothers. What if some of us believe in one form of baptism, and some in another? What if some of us believe in predestination, and some do not? What if some of us believe in Apostolic succession, and some do not? These things have no vital relation to the salvation of men or to the conquests of the Cross."

(Hayes. Ph.199.)





In the membership of a local church are people from various denominations. If their own denomination is not represented in the community, or the church of their particular denomination is too far away, or they have a personal liking for the preacher, or their personal friends are in the neighboring congregation, these "inter-denominationalists" pass from one denomination to another without hesitation or without any sense of personal loss.

Many people belong to a particular church not because of any intelligent and deliberate choice of its polity or doctrine, but merely because they happened to be born in a certain family, or in a certain locality, or in a certain social group; or because they have certain natural temperaments, or certain social affinities.

So many people are not interested in the things which divide the churches from each other! So many people are interested in anything which tends toward greater unity and efficiency in the work of the Kingdom! So many, failing not to see the evils of sectarianism, are becoming impatient with the men and the institutions which block the way to unity. While the leaders are sensitive about their





orders and their dogmas, so many of the rank and file of the laity are pressing forward with a passion of brotherhood and unity, which is acquiring the proportions of a revolution and which will in time answer "the challenge of a divided church"!

"We feel that the divisions of the church in our country are no longer tolerable, because they obscure that unity in Christ which we know to be more real than our differences. We ask for instant and courageous action. We want to serve a church which stands as One in fearless love of Truth."

(Student Christian Movement  
in England.)

Truths have been very vital at one time; it may have been heroic for The Fathers to stand by their principles. But now that the battle is over, the necessity fulfilled, shall their children perpetuate obsolete issues? The conscience of youth revolts against any such super-imposed necessity. Multitudes are beginning to see that divisions are not necessary to freedom of thought; that sects are apt to narrow ones vision, hinder ones growth, instead of helping to preserve and increase these things--freedom; growth (progress); vision; service; righteousness; love.



"The church is in danger of disintegrating for lack of an organizing principle. She needs new ideals, new stimulated enthusiasm, a new message, and a new vision of her mission. The challenge is hurled to each and to all by the new revelation of the gospel of Jesus. It comes now clarified by historical-biblical scholarship, fortified by the teachings of science and psychology, and demanded by scientific-sociology. It challenges every one of us to live in the ideals that made Jesus great. It challenges us to the inspiring task of making the world over after the pattern of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is challenging us individually to live lovingly, sacrificially, and joyously. He is challenging us collectively to reclaim the home, to enduce the church to believe Jesus; to make business, industry, and the professions means of serving humanity; to provide places for children to play, instead of slaying them in the streets; to provide adults wholesome places of entertainment, instead of turning over the important matter of amusement to the unregulated commercialized institutions; to clean up and make sweet and beautiful the disgracefully dirty and ugly parts of our great cities; to make village life wholesome; to make the famr, activities and farm life interesting and developing; to provide news





which is not lies and not debasing; to see that no man of whatever race or color is despised; to save society from snobishness on the one hand and from equally narrowing loneliness on the other; to make the "sisterhood of nations" a reality, instead of a hypocrisy; to eliminate war, the greatest scourge of humanity;--in a word, to finish the task begun by Jesus of bringing in the Kingdom of God. The challenge makes every one who hears it either worse or better, according as he refuses its implications or rises to a vision and invests his life in its realization."

(Tolson. XXVI.)



## Chapter II.

## THE ROOTS OF DENOMINATIONALISM.

"The effort to distinguish churches primarily by reference to their doctrine and to approach the problem of church unity from a purely theological point of view appeared to him (Richard Niebuhr) to be a procedure so artificial and fruitless that he found himself compelled to turn from theology to history, sociology, (psychology), and ethics for a more satisfactory account of denominational differences and a more significant approach to the question of union."

(Niebuhr. Preface.)

Every large body of people brought together into any organization--political, social, ecclesiastical--tend in time to resemble the two ends of a mule. There will be the conservative end and the radical end.

Conservatism stands like the front end of the mule when it balks and is stubborn. It plants its two feet--immovable as Gibraltar. It may be beaten, but it will be just as fixed in its tracks as before. Its eyes will be uninterested; its look, innocent and satisfied; its head, the throne of obstinacy and stubbornness incarnate. It has a pair of long ears, which are seemingly deaf to all appeals to procede on its journey, but which it uses to brush away



the flies from its peaceful repose. The only perceptable movement in that end of the mule is the solemn blink of the eye and the periodic flap of the ears.

The Radical party is at the other extreme. When the front end of the mule seems to be most sleepy and most set in its ways, the other end may display the most unexpected activity. It may be kicking at any old thing in sight with the rapidity of lightning and the force of a thunderbolt.

(Hayes. Pg.197.)

Both ends belong to the same mule. No wise man would think of pulling them assunder. Why may not Fundamentalism and Modernism both have their places in the Christian church? If each could recognize the proper function of the other, would not they move on in peace and harmony together?

Why do the Conservatives in the church decide that the Radicals ought to be put out of it? Because they believe: that they alone have the Truth; that the Radicals are trying to prove their cherished Truth antiquated and inadequate; that uniformity with their opinion is essential to church



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unity and individual salvation. But uniformity of thought is neither possible nor desirable, either in the Christian church or in any other social relation.

"There is no war between science and religion, though there is sometimes hot battles between certain scientists and certain religious people. There is no legitimate war between science and theology, though there is a state of belligerency often existing between certain workers in the field of science and certain theorists in the realm of theology. There is no impact of Modernism upon Christian faith, though the misleading phrase is sometimes used, but there are hostilities from time to time--quite continuous, in fact--between Modernists and others with reference to what constitutes Christian faith and still more in regard to questions which every one knows are not matters of faith."

(Garrison. Ch.2.)

Yet, there is a real issue between two types of mind: the mind that prefers to rest upon authority, and the mind that tries to base its conclusions upon evidence. Both desire the highest possible degree of certainty, but there is controversy due to the basis of convictions. The "authoritarian" feels certain only when his convictions are certified as true by a dependable authority. But the "factualist" is only certain on a basis of evidence.



Science has its conformists and its non-conformists--those open-minded and eager for all new evidence, and those leaning upon the authority of whatever doctrine is popular at the moment. Yet, science tends strongly toward "reverence for the facts".

Religion also tries to build upon an assured basis of facts--facts of history and facts of individual and social experience. But the interests involved are so vital and the values so transcendent--the deepest emotions and most compelling motives so closely related by association with old theories, forms, and practices--that it is not easy to keep the mind open to new facts. The tendency, therefore, has been to emphasize authority rather than evidence.

"The conflict is not between science and religion, but between that attitude which trusts evidence and that which relies upon authority."

(Garrison. Ch.2.)

"Religion if it is to have any continuing value in life of man, ~~it~~ must be chiefly for what it asserts, not for what it denies; chiefly for what it puts into life, not for what it takes out."

(Garrison. Ch.1.)





The progress of intelligence in matters of religion would be greatly advanced, if all men would talk as intelligently as they think; if all those who base their opinions and practices on evidence and experience would admit that they do so and not try to give them foundation in authority for the sake of appearing to be orthodox. Too many are "content to find standing room under the eaves of the sanctuary, tacitly confessing by their timid attitude that the main temple belongs to the traditionalists, and only too well satisfied if they could escape attention and avoid being put out of the synagogue." The hope of the future lies in a type of religion, of theology, and of Christian ethics which is perfectly open-minded toward facts--facts of history and nature and of moral and spiritual experiences--facts that are both practiced and believed.

"If the men who hold a modern world view believe that that view is not only consistent with a religious attitude, but is helpful to religion and conducive to the development of the highest type of Christian personality, why not say so with clarity and emphasis? If they found that the so-called newer view of the Bible makes it an infinitely more readable, creditable, lovable, and livable book, why not boldly proclaim the faith that is in them in such terms that their hearers, whether they agree with them or not, will at least know what they mean?"

(Garrison. Ch.2.)



Modern ministers believe in the Bible as an inspiring and inspired human record of the efforts of God and man to find each other, but they speak of it and use it as though it were an inerrant transcript of the Divine mind. They believe in the higher criticism as an indispensable process for the understanding of the Bible, but they shy at the word and conceal the process behind pious and ambiguous phrases which leave their hearers ready to be a prey to the fanatic who comes to identify higher criticism with infidelity. They believe in the evolution of nature and in the development of religion, but they talk of creation and revelation in such terms that no enlightenment comes to the mind of those who hear.

What does this mean? Doubtless, the immediate result of this policy is peace and harmony in the local congregation. The larger result is that many thousands of earnest and deeply religious laymen, who have never done much thinking for themselves, have the conviction that these modern views are held only by a few "infidel scientists" and by a group of noisy radicals. Hence, is it surprising that people outside of the church conclude that the church as a whole is unaware of the progress of scientific thought.





"If the minister is content to be merely a "private chaplin cooperatively sustained" and to echo the sentiments of his perishioners in the terms most familiar and least disturbing to them, he has his reward. But if one wishes to perform a service which has in it any valid quality of leadership, then one must assume the risks which are involved in leadership, chief of which is the risk of not being followed."

(Garrison. Ch.2.)

Today, people are so accustomed to think in terms of a divided church that they find themselves not only involved in a multiplicity of divisions, but facing the difficulty of finding a way to think in terms of a united Christendom and being Christian to all other Christians. Next in importance to the coming of Christianity into the world is the attaining of Christianity into unity. If in the first period, love to and faith in God through Christ were established, in the second period, love of and faith in ones fellowmen must be established. But the second is an inevitable outcome of the first;--love to and faith in God results in love of and faith in ones fellowmen. Hence, the awakened conscience is apparently absent. Love of and faith in ones fellowmen must come irrespective of theological dogmas or creeds of ecclesiastical councils. If the church is a Divine (Christian) institution, it must necessarily contain the elements of unity (brotherhood).





"If we find something that is pushing us away from our fellows, let us not deceive ourselves by thinking that something is religion. The fact is that that something is irreligion, for religion is fundamentally the bond of kinship and love which binds us together and to God."

(Ainslie. Ch.1)

Natural sociality and mutual advantage impell men to unity. One of the purposes of Christianity is to remove the barriers of discord and unfriendliness, making it easier and more permanent for men to come into a spiritual fellowship. But what are termed convictions--methods of baptism and communion; conceptions of the ministry and the church; practices of worship and living--separate so-called Christians. But, are these convictions?

Frequently, the opinions of these varying church people have been labeled convictions; yet, they cannot be compromised with the idea of permanency. Every life that is growing toward God is revising its convictions constantly. When one is able to classify his own thinking, which are convictions and which are opinions--this being an all too often unaccomplished task--, he finds it necessary to revise the former and give liberty to the latter, if he desires



adjustment to the spiritual necessity of the times. This confusion of conviction, opinion, and the progressive range of each is quite often the deepest root of denominationalism.

No one can look for the unity of Christendom to come by the way of compromised convictions. But the tragedy of division is that it is maintained by compromise. Are people willing to regard their opinions to the last ditch of failure, continuing to compromise the Spirit of Christ by division in the church, or are they willing to revise their convictions, surrendering to the leadership of the Spirit? Only by recognizing the conflict between these two questions, and by answering affirmatively the latter, will people find the way to the triumph of the will of God among men.

"We hear much about the undeveloped resources of electricity, mineralogy, and other sciences, but the vastest undeveloped resources are in the domain of the uncharted and unsounded depths of the spirituality of God and the human soul. We have exploited to the limit hair-splitting definitions of all terms in the realm of theology and invented new terms to satisfy our (whims). Upon these definitions have been established most of the hard and fast divisions of Christendom. This condition leads each of the many communions to believe that it is a law unto itself--that because it is separated from others, it is accountable only to those





with whom it is separated--thereby, dwarfing love, blighting brotherhood and shattering the spiritual universe into as many parts as parties, and each building up itself at the expense of tearing down what Jesus came to establish. The time has come for new discoveries! Action is already over due!"

(Ainslie. Ch.1.)

The various divisions of Christianity--Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and the multiplicity of Protestants--are proudly conducting their affairs as though each were the whole church. However satisfactory the annual reports may be, it is a policy that pronounces the doom of Christianity, unless there comes a spiritual awakening, whereby the broken threads of Christian brotherhood are knit again into a permanent unity in Christ.

The whole world has awakened to the needs and possibilities of intellectual development. Knowledge is power, and the intellect is given us for development. But is this intellectual development under the influence of Christianity? And is Christianity permeated by the development? All sorts of schemes and prizes are being put forth in the Sunday schools, rather than the charm of the knowledge of the glory of God, to increase, or even uphold, the



attendance. All over the world, there are constant adjustments of national educational systems in order for each to reach its intellectual development. But education is not merely intellectual development.

"Education is a gradual adjustment to the spiritual possessions of the race."

("Meaning of education."  
Nicholas Murray Butler.)

Therefore, education is not expressed in terms of intelligence, but in terms of conduct and character. Its function is "to prepare us for complete living", according to Herbert Spencer. So long as religion receives a secondard place, if a place at all, in education, intellectual development will probably be a power for evil. Further, if religion is not permiated with intellectual development, it will die. When Greece and Rome were highest in intellectual development, they were lowest in morals. Hence, this crisis, whether dealing with the local church or with education or with an unbelieving world, is a challenge for the unity of Christendom. Its solution is Christianized education, intellectualized Christianity, and spiritualized life.





### Chapter III.

#### THE RENAISSANCE OF LOVE.

"Jesus stands with patient and quiet smile at the gates of the twentieth century waiting till this lagging multitude catch up with Him; then He will lead the tired and the famished into His city of love."

"They told us that more than a thousand pilgrims climbed to the top of Fujiyama on the same day on which we made the ascent. We did not see them on our way. We saw only our own little company. There were many paths to the heights. Pilgrims started their journey on different sides of the mountain. There were forests dividing us at the beginning. Foothills hid us from each others view. We were wholly unaware of the multitudes toiling toward the same goal with ourselves. We met them only when we reached the heights.

"There were many miles of distance between us at the bottom of the trails. As we climbed, we were separated from each other by great and seemingly impossible ravines. As we neared the top, we came nearer and nearer each other. The separating ravines grew smaller and smaller, and at last they disappeared. On the way up, there was rain,





with black clouds blotting out the heavens, and a dense fog shrouding most of the earth. At the top, there was sunshine. We all came together in the heights."

(Hayes. Foreword.)

Is that experience a parable of the progress toward church unity? Does the picture symbolize the sure outcome of the climbing toward the goal? All Christians are endeavoring to attain the same height of unclouded communion with God in Christ. The separate churches and sects live for the most part in utter ignorance of each other. Many think that there are vast ravines of differences between them and their brethern who are striving toward the same ideals. As all approach these ideals, the separating streams become so tiny that they can be stepped over. The formidable ravines diminish and finally disappear. In the heights, all come together. All differing and partial views become one broad outlook upon the whole horizon. Yet, how progressive is the ascent and how is the ascent accomplished?

"Repentance of the whole church--a repentance of us all in terms of a new attitude of mind and heart--will do more to bring a new day in the church of Christ for its growth into unity than any other experience in the possibility of the human soul."

(Ainslie. Pg.69.)



In the rise and spread of Christianity, three outstanding and definite proposals sum up the tendency toward unity:-- the Roman Catholic, centering in Papal Supremacy; the Protestant Episcopal, stressing the Episcopate; and the Disciples of Christ, emphasizing Congregationalism; Christ, of course, being the over-ruling head in each proposal.

Cardinal Gibbons in a letter to Peter Ainslie most clearly and emphatically expresses the Catholic view point.

"I heartily join in the effort for Christian unity, for schism is a curse, whereas unity is a blessing. But Jesus Christ has pointed out the only means by which this unity can be brought about and maintained, such as the recognition of Peter and his successors as the head of the Church. Build upon this foundation, and you will not erect a Tower of Babel nor build upon the Sands."

(Ainslie.II-III.)

The Chicago Lambeth Articles of 1886 sum up in brief the Episcopal proposal.

- "1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as a sufficient statement of Christian faith.
3. The two Sacraments,--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,--ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.





4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His church."

Peter Ainslie states the proposal for unity of the Disciples of Christ as follows:

- "1. A Catholic name for individuals, such as "Disciples", "Christians", etc.; and for the whole body, "Church of Christ", "Church of God", "Christian Church", etc..
2. A Catholic Creed such as expressed in these words of the Apostle Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God".
3. A Catholic book--the Holy Scriptures--as sufficient for the rule of Christian life.
4. A Catholic administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as practiced in the New Testament times and with the use of Christ's words.
5. A Catholic polity of church government, recognizing universal suffrage and priesthood of all believers.
6. A Catholic brotherhood, holding fellowship in the Lord's Supper with all who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior."

Since some of the most distinguished and most devoted people in history have held membership in the denominations represented by these three proposals, they quite obviously deserve an equal consideration. But they must stand on their own merits. Have they functioned well in behalf of Christian Unity?



"The challenge of a divided church" answers.

To the first proposal, the answer is in the severe division of the eleventh century and the severer division of the sixteenth century. To the second proposal, the answer is in the three divisive and unreconciled Episcopates and several smaller ones. To the third proposal, the answer is in the division of about four hundred thousand members going off on such minor matters as missionary methods and church music.

"The growth of Christian unity out of which these (proposals) have come and of which these are parts must find its blossom in an atmosphere more pregnant with the Spirit of Christ. Our need is not so much for a plan as for a Spirit--the Spirit of Christ. A common creed will not solve the problem, only a common Spirit will--the Spirit of the common Savior of us all in the hearts of those who believe in Him."

(Ainslie.)

Christianity cannot go back into Judaism;

Protestantism cannot go back under papal rule; neither can Protestantism remain where it is. Ecclesiastical unity is both undesirable and impossible; a multiplicity of denominations is also undesirable;--if Christianity lives.





Since theological diversities exist today in Protestantism, it was only partially triumphant in the sixteenth century. But this does not mean that unity is the way of uniformity, for unity would be more properly termed the way of cooperation. A united Christendom lies beyond and above any of the present Christian organizations.

"Jesus of Nazareth is a Life, a Life, a Life," says a Hindu scholar (Paul Karishka). In this lies the secret of a united Christendom. "The growth of the church into unity must be in terms of and conformity to the eternal laws of life."

"Sectarianism must be abolished. Henceforth, let no man glory in his denomination; that is sectarianism: but let all men glory in Christ and practice brotherhood with all men; that is Christianity."

(Ainslie. Pg.69.)

Unity?--yes; but unity in a more simple and comprehensive truth. The more of God that is possessed, the more humble and willing Christians are (or ought to be).





Protestant unity is only possible with liberty in matters of forms, organizations, creeds, etc. It must be a unity in Christ--a unity in a cooperative brotherhood, that is not so much concerned with getting its rights as it is in manifesting the will of God in the attitude of brother to brother in all international, social, economic, and spiritual relations.

"Present day transactions are showing us that the trend of affairs is away from ecclesiastical autocracy and is towards Christian democracy."

Unity will come in the "concord of spirits" and not by conquest in debate. It will be maintained not by unconditional surrender to any aggressive authority, but by mutual yieldings to the persuasions of love and continuous loyalty to the leading and the living of the Spirit of Jesus. Until the attainment of this ideal, the "visionaries" must be content with the invisible unity of the Spirit in which the church now is, at least potentially, One.

It is possible and best to have variety with harmony in the united church. All races, all classes, all temperaments, with all their diversified opinions and tastes, can be in a truly Catholic church, if the bond of



unity is found not in any of these things in which people necessarily do and must differ, but if the bond of unity is found in a common principle of life, a common faith in and baptism with the Spirit of Christ, a common God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

"Is it only a dream? No; it is a part of our faith. Jesus prayed that his church might be One, and it will be One in Heaven; we pray that the will of God may be done on earth even as it is done in Heaven, and we have faith to believe that that prayer sometime will be answered."

(Hayes. IV:4.)

What church ought to take the initiative? What church is most likely to carry the enterprise through to success? Who can tell! Unexpected agents may be raised up at any time. An unsuspected development may take place at any moment. Church history is full of great surprises. "Spirit-filled" individuals and "Spirit-filled" churches can work miracles, can accomplish the impossible.

"The union we seek is a Christian union. Our unity of organization must rest on a Christian foundation. The sanctity of the church will be manifested in the unity of





the church; and the sanctity and unity of the church will result in the world's conversion. ... .. The Highway of Holiness is a high Way. We must climb to reach it. It will be attained only by earnest effort."

(Hayes. IV:8.)

Rationally, it would seem necessary for Protestants to acknowledge the technical irregularities of the reformation period, for the Roman Catholics to renounce their persecutions and unjust discipline, and for all to repent of the bitterness of spirit and unloving conduct of all times. But Spiritually, in the realization of present Christian brotherhood and the possibility of eternal peace, sad and bad history may be forgotten;--logic may give way to love.

"I care not to convince my oponents of error; I aspire to be united with them in a higher truth."

(Harnack.)

Is this vision never to be realized? Harnack says it may be if procedure is upon five principles:-- 1. All politics must be eliminated. 2. All useless controversies must be avoided and a fair and honest method of calm



discussion be instituted. 3. All parties must try to be just to each other. 4. Each church must try to appreciate the religious and spiritual life of the other churches. 5. A higher unity and a further truth than we have yet known must be held as the final ideal.

"All paths converge as we climb into the heights. By many ways the pilgrims arrive; but they come together at last at the top. They have been one in aspiration, and they are one in attainment."

(Hayes. IV:8.)

"We may be unable to achieve it (unity), but it is within our power, and it is consequently within our duty to prepare for it and to pave the way for it."

(Cardinal Mercier.)

The "pilgrims" will believe that it is possible to arrive at some form of organization which will combine liberty and unity, conserving the values in differences and making possible the gains of united life,--service and love. They will be inclined to believe that if the unity of Christendom is not possible, then either Christianity is not of God, or all Christian communities are on a false basis. They will say: "If this vision remain until it is fully realized, we will live in the spirit and hope of its accomplishment."





The spirit of John Wesley would make possible the maintainance of peace and harmony in a united church.

He says:

"Condemn no man for not thinking as you think. Let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself. Let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God. Abhor every approach, in any kind or degree, to the spirit of persecution. If you cannot reason or persuade men into the Truth, never attempt to force a man into it."

Independence is desirable. Individualism is admirable; but it is not the function of individualism to maintain isolation. It is its privilege to be a cooperating part of the whole, since every sensible man knows that he himself is not infallable. Where he thinks he is sure of the Truth, it is possible that his neighbor, who differs with him, may be partly right and may be approaching the same truth from a different point of view. Individualism plus association may even bring a richer Truth. Individual independence of thinking plus unity of the Spirit of Christ may bring harmony in diversity.





"We do not ask others to think as we think, and we do not ask others to join us, our church and denomination, when we plead for organic union of all the churches. We simply ask that with all their different opinions on many matters, and with all their different customs and modes of worship and thought, they join with us in realizing the one universal church of Christ in the world."

(Hayes. III:1.)

No church has a monopoly of infallable Truth. No creed expresses the whole of Faith. No church can claim to have the infallable interpretation of either Truth or Faith. All make mistakes. All are in the fog together. In a "renaissance of love"--in a greater realization and truer practice of the love of Christ lies the progress of Christianity and the hope of a united church, whose standard might read:

"Is he a good man? Does he love God? Does he love his fellowmen? Is he laboring for their good? Then, let him go his way in peace; he is not against us but for us. He is doing the same sort of work we are trying to do, and he is living the same kind of life we are trying to live."

"We pray for organic unity among the churches as soon as that may be possible, believing that it will tend to the greater glory of God. We pray for unbroken fraternal union



among all of the churches as long as their separate existence may last. We pray for practical cooperation in all Christian work; and in this common work to a common end, we hope to realize that ideal of James Martineau, in a unity "more deep seated and affectionate than that of mere opinion; a unity of allegiance to one Father, and toil for one brotherhood, and aspiration for one home in Heaven; the universal church of good and faithful souls, adorning God's providence with varieties of thought, and strengthening it by continuousness of love."

Thus the movement toward unity is dynamic rather than static. The progressive efforts to reach church unity are to be found, not so much in the depths of Christian Conscience or in the heights of Christian Idealism, as in the plain of habits, conventions, practices. The problem is not to create unity, but to manifest it; not to make it anew out of the destructions of individual inheritance, but to make it manifested as one life. Christians must be true in thought and deed to the fundamental Oneness in Christ.

"Living among men in the Love of the Son of Man as the servant of all men; obedient in every thought to the Truth which makes free, and possessing as its own the fullness of its creeds--such more visibly shall be the one Catholic or Universal church." (Smith.)





Jesus was the center of a group of close followers, and from this group grew the Apostolic Church. The nature and meaning of the Christian church must be interpreted in the light of this fellowship--a personal relationship to a living Lord. The bond of fellowship was a personal trust and a common belief, very simple in character. Precisely the same characteristic marks the group of Christ's followers after his death. Only because these followers knew by experience (direct or indirect) that their Lord was living did their fellowship continue unbroken. It was in the relationship with one another that these Christians continually realized their relation to Christ. Today, this same sense of personal relationship, grounded in faith, is just as necessary to perpetuate Christianity, particularly in the achieving of church unity. Christianity as a world-wide institution, with its theology and its sacraments, its schisms and divisions, its sins and failures, is far removed from the group of Jesus' Disciples from which it has evolved. But salvation is to be found in the revival of the vital spirit of fellowship rooted in personal relationship to a living Lord. The way to unity is in "the renaissance of love."



The necessities that lie ahead are not in forms, ceremonies, and declarations. The test must be found in awakening that true nobility of soul that sets man in the proper attitude to God and to his fellows. Ainslie sums up the necessary standards of a Christian in the steps toward unity of the church:

"1. A Christian must be free for the real development of his spiritual nature, free from the bondage of sin, and free to live the Life of the Spirit, drawing upon the ideals and experiences of both the past and the present, without the dictates of external authority.

2. A Christian must have his own experience with God, the outcome of his own faith, issuing in a life of penitance, humility, and service.

3. A Christian must have fellowship with all souls that have fellowship with God, and anything that hinders that fellowship is essentially evil, and its abolition is as imperative as the removal of anything that hinders the fellowship of the soul with God.

4. A Christian's life, as in deed the church's life, must interpret love as revealed in the life and death of Jesus, accepting it so fully as to be willing to take the risks in the midst of a society that has not yet accepted it."

(Ainslie. I:3.)





These propositions are reasonable, if Christians are to move on toward the Christlike Ideal. They indicate clearly, though, the necessity for Christianity to move on beyond where the church now is, if Christians are even going to find the right spiritual atmosphere. Conferences are helpful, but conferences, alone, cannot unite the divided church; working together is helpful, but simply working together will not solve the problems; increasing church efficiency and church activities are helpful, but that does not produce unity. There must be Divine power-- the love of Christ in the heart; the practices of Christ in living.

"The welfare of the world, and even the preservation of our civilization, depend upon the response of our times to the challenge of this recovery of Jesus and his way of Life. Teachers, in the pulpits, in the class rooms, and by means of the press, must herald the gospel of Jesus and make his way of life known to the popular mind. Nothing will save our civilization short of the incarnation of the principles of Jesus in modern life by practical men in whose hands is the technique of education, industry, politics, and international and inter-racial statesmanship.

"If Christianity can be converted into the religion of Jesus, if the church can be brought to believe in Jesus' teaching, and if those in whose hands are the economic and political destinies of our times incarnate Jesus into their affairs, we are saved."

{Tolson. I:1.}



End of

If not denominations?

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